DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 356 174 SO 022 978

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TITLE	The Nationalities Question-from Versailles to the Present Day. European Teachers' Seminar (Esneux, Belgium, April 18-19, 1991). Report.
INSTITUTION	Council for Cultural Cooperation, Strasbourg (France).
REPORT NO	DECS/SE/BS/Sem (91)2
PUB DATE	92
NOTE	30p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Director of Education, Culture and Sport, Council of Europe, BP431 R6, F-67006, Strasbourg Cedex, France.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Ethnic Groups; Ethnic Relations; *European History; *International Relations; *Nationalism; World War I
IDENTIFIERS	*Twentieth Century

ABSTRACT

This document is the report of a seminar convened for European teachers on the subject of the nationalities question. The conference was held in the wake of drastic changes that came with the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe. Participants focused on the nationality and border issues that arose from the treaties that ended World War I. The purpose of the discussions was to clarify the circumstances that largely determined the configuration of Europe that the rupture of the Soviet bloc was challenging. Following an introduction and a review of terminology, the document addresses: (1) "Nationalities and the Disappearance of the Great European Empires"; (2) "Two Victims of Contemporary History: Albania and Lithuania"; (3) "Nationalism in the Various Components of Belgium"; (4) "The Council of Europe and National Minorities"; and (5) "Conclusions." An appendix provides a list of participants. (LBG)

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The nationalities question — from Versailles to the present day

European Teachers' Seminar
Esneux, Belgium, 18-19 April 1991

Report

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- the promotion of an awareness of European identity;
- the search for common responses to the great challenges facing European society.

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COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL CO-OPERATION

TEACHER BURSARIES SCHEME

European seminar on

THE NATIONALITIES QUESTION - FROM VERSAILLES TO THE PRESENT DAY

Esneux, Belgium, 18-19 April 1991

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1. INTRODUCTION

Each year the Ministry of Education holds a residential training course for secondary school history teachers in the French-speaking community of Belgium, to discuss a topic which may be either chiefly scientific or chiefly educational.

In 1989, within the space of a few months, the area of "forced stability" that was Eastern Europe underwent a series of profound and decisive changes in the political, economic, military and cultural spheres. These upset the - often imperfect - balance ensuing from the treaties that followed the first world war and from the de facto situation established in 1945.

A further consideration, fraught with uncertainties, is the fact that the concept of nation, which Marxist-Leninist doctrine intended to obliterate in the name of proletarian internationalism, has once again become front-page news.

In two days the Esneux symposium could not expect to hold a comprehensive discussion of these issues. It set itself the more modest aim of conducting a - necessarily fragmentary - review of the nationality and border issues directly or indirectly stemming from the treaties that ended the First World War. Its purpose was to clarify the circumstances which largely determined the configuration of Europe now challenged by the disappearance of the artificial dividing line formed by the Iron Curtain.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF TERMINOLOGY

What is a "nation"? by Jean STENGERS, Professor of history, Université Libre de Bruxelles

First and foremost, it must be stressed that it is impossible to define the term "nation" objectively because it has so many subjective associations for each individual. However, four different conceptions of the term may be formulated, each linked to a specific period in the history of Europe:

- it denotes the population of a state, irrespective of that population's characteristics and feelings. That is the definition given by the Encyclopaedia, compiled at the end of the 18th century;

- it denotes a group of people which possesses objective features warranting a political life of its own (for example, in Europe, language). This conception of the term is most widespread in Germany, but French usage in the 19th and 20th centuries is very close to it;

- it denotes a group of people which is highly diverse, but shares a feeling of community resulting in those people's desire live together. This is the 'spiritual principle' formulated by Renan

- it denotes the body of citizens enjoying political rights and asserting those rights in opposition to the Sovereign. That is the conception formulated during the French Revolution.

As is clear from the above, each of these definitions is closely bound up with its time (Ancien Régime, romantic Germany, positivist philosophy, French Revolution). In addition, they are by no means all-purpose definitions and some insoluble contradictions even arise between them. For instance, some would regard Alsace-Lorraine as an example of a group of people possessing objective features (in this case language) which bind it to Germany. But the French would view Alsace-Lorraine as an example of a group of people whose "spiritual principle" demands that they live as part of France.

A further difficulty is the fact that the concept of nation evolves. Under the Ancien Régime, the fate of the nation was decided primarily by the King's military successes and defeats. National feeling might or might not develop during the process. But the 19th and 20th centuries marked a complete change, with the emergence of the group's belief that it possessed a true nature expressed by the language it used (an idea mooted by Herder and taken up by Fichte): "Those who speak the same language form an entity that nature has welded together in advance". The first application of this principle is to be found in the establishment of the borders of the future Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, which were drawn, on the initiative of Prussia and Austria, in line with linguistic boundaries.

Herder's principle was taken up by Flemish intellectuals in "official" French-speaking Belgium as early as 1834, but nothing really happened until the beginning of the 20th century because the soil in which those ideas might germinate was lacking at the time. Nor should it be forgotten that in the 19th and 20th centuries there were some irrational views on the issue, such as those of Cyril Verschaeve, a Flemish nationalist theoretician, who claimed that Flanders stemmed from the everlasting will of God.

This example shows that sooner or later mythical elements become involved, prompting the scientific mind to regard the concept of nation as a comparatively absurd and, therefore, as harmful. While historians may agree in the name of scientific precision, citizens may, on the other hand, consider that nations remain essential as institutions forming a fabric that it would be highly dangerous to unravel.

Discussion of the paper

- Is it possible to establish a "law" explaining when and why nations awaken? It is difficult to work out models because each case has its own explanation. Conflicting forces may come into play; the influence of French nationalism explains the refusal of many inhabitants of Alsace-Lorraine to be assimilated, but at the same time it must be admitted that assimilation succeeded to a certain extent.

Resistance against oppression may also come into play, as in the case of the Baltic peoples, Georgia and Poland. A further factor is freedom for intellectuals to uphold their views, and even the atmosphere prevailing at the time, as with the romantic movement.

- Is not regionalism gradually replacing nationalism in Western Europe? The regional factor carries real weight only if coupled with a linguistic component.

- In view of the example of Poland, where the Church upheld national identity, what relationship can be established between nationality and religion? The influence of religion needs to be handled with caution in a discussion of this issue, because it might very soon lead to justifying Louis XIV's determination to achieve unity of faith. As regards Poland, if the 19th century had not been a time of comparative religious tolerance, the tsar would have eliminated Catholic influence.

3. NATIONALITIES AND THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE GREAT EUROPEAN EMPIRES

3.1 Russian nationalism from tsarist imperialism to the present day, by Francis BALACE, Lecturer, Université de Liège

The collective image of peoples and individuals may vary over the centuries. There are numerous examples, from the 17th to the 19th centuries, of the French being depicted as militarist, the Germans as mild and the Americans as refusing any involvement in international affairs. But some analyses prove relevant despite the passage of time and the succession of political regimes. Custine, for example, in his account of travels in Russia in 1839, emphasised the Russians' profound belief that giving up all or part of their freedom, sacrificing themselves, was the best way they could assist the spread of a doctrine.

Indecipherable diplomacy?

After 1917, but before 1939, informed American diplomats were convinced that Soviet diplomatic aims combined Marxist-Leninist theory and practice with the Russian national character. George Kennan, for example, detected a high degree of continuity in both domestic and foreign policy from the

time of the tsars to that of Stalin. But Kennan is a creditable exception: after 1945 the vast majority of Sovietologists frenziedly searched Lenin's theoretical works (written well before 1914!) for the keys to the present. To complicate matters still further, the Kremlin asserted that it was of no use searching for those keys because its diplomacy differed in its very essence. Kennan was not fooled, nor was Churchill, who said in 1939 that Russian politics was a charade wrapped up in a mystery inside an enigma, but that there might be a key - the Russian national interest.

The constant trend is obvious: together with expansion towards the vast lands of Asia and the distant Pacific, the top priority since Peter the Great was to open up two windows to the West: one onto the Baltic and the other onto the Black Sea. This resolve was invariably complicated by the feeling of a difference to be preserved (whether orthodoxy, autocracy or Marxism) in the face of the West, which could only be a source of decadence and decay. Hence the "cordon sanitaire" which Russia in fact always wanted. But this unchanging trend is further complicated by a somewhat messianic national attitude (Holy Alliance, Slavophile mystique, mystique of the world proletariat), and Russia's entire diplomatic history amounts to either confrontation, co-existence or co-operation between these opposing factors.

Admittedly, the advocates of the "fundamentally different" view of Russia could argue that foreign communist movements were used. But the answer to that is that the role of the Komintern or the Third International should certainly not be overestimated: whenever the circumstances dictated it, there was a return to the traditional values of Greater Russia.

Colonies, not conquests

While the other powers went in search of far-flung territories, Russia colonised step-by-step, as the opportunity arose. From 1922 onwards it considered Europe a useful source of supplies and trade outlets. It therefore returned to "normal" international relations, but at the same time expanded into Asia and, like the 19th century Slavophiles, regarded the East as a tool to be used against Europe.

Thus, whereas Europeans view Yalta and Potsdam only in terms of the USSR's territorial acquisitions in Eastern Europe, they should also see them as resumption of a movement dating back centuries: the advance towards the East and the descent towards the South.

The origins of this complex tradition lie in the Slavophile movement, which, according to its own theory, regenerated a world corrupted by the West by placing the accent on the social value of love and fellowship. In the 1860s, for example, in his book Russia and Europe, the

biologist Danilevsky explained that the specific features of the Orthodox Church were love and renunciation, confronting Europe and rejecting any form of agreement with it so as to retain a free hand.

The West has never properly understood the Slavophile movement, which it assumed to be a "merely" pan-Slavic movement , whereas its basis is essentially religious - whence Russia's negative attitude to Poles, Czechs, Croats, Slovenians and Slovaks, all of whom were of non-Orthodox faith. Its only real interest was in the Serbs and Bulgarians, echoing the myth of Constantinople, and in fact extending it with the dream of a vast maritime entity covering the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf. This Eurasian doctrine was extremely popular in Russian intellectual circles at the beginning of this century.

To sum up, the above outline shows several constant trends linking Russia and the USSR.

- the Russian or Soviet siege mentality, keen to preserve the country's distinctive character by sheltering behind a glacis;

- the lack of purely ideological motivations in foreign policy, sometimes extending to unnatural alliances;

- in the event of barriers to the West, shifting of the sphere of activity to the Mediterranean, East Africa or the Persian Gulf;

- the dream of expansion towards the Far East ... but recently with competition from the "Chinese brother".

3.2 The national question in Germany since 1945, by M LENGEREAU, Professor of Political Science, Grenoble

Terminology[1]

A discussion of this broad and difficult topic calls for prior clarification of the concepts which are bound to be used.

The term nation derives from the latin natio, denoting a group of people united by the ties of blood, language and customs, irrespective of their individual will. In France in the Middle Ages the nation retained its meaning independently of the political framework (eg the "Four Nations" of the University of Paris); it began to be confused with the state only in the 18th century.

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[1] This part of the paper draws on and supplements the paper by Mr J STENGERS reproduced above.

The 1789 revolution brought about a profound change in the concept of nation, which now denoted a fictitious being representing all the citizens, but distinct from them and wielding sovereignty. As the nation had to coincide with the state, the latter became a national state or "nation-state".

At the same time, whether directly or by way of reaction, France brought the idea of "nation by intent" to the fore in Europe, thereby engendering what is known as the principle of nationalities: any nation or nationality (nation in the original sense of the term) is entitled to aspire to set itself up as a state or join the state to which it is linked by objective affinities (language, culture). On the other hand, any established state will tend to become a nation-state and therefore to assimilate the national minorities located on its territory.

Fichte was the first to formulate this idea, in his Discourse to the German nation (1807-08). He defined the nation as the entity formed by all the German-speaking countries, despite their political divisions.

In the 19th century, therefore, the term nation reflected very different realities:

- abstract nation, coinciding with the state;
- "objective" nation formed by peoples sharing the same identity;
- "subjective" nation formed by peoples who feel that they belong, and want to belong, to the same group.

Broadly speaking, German theoreticians were in favour of the second definition, while the French were in favour of the third. So the case of Alsace-Lorraine was to afford them an opportunity for a full-blown polemic.

From the first to the second world war

The Second Reich included several national minorities: Danes, Alsatians and Lorrainers, Lithuanians and above all three million Poles. There were also pockets of Germans (Volksdeutsche) outside the empire, in Romania and especially Russia. Pan-Germanist leagues kept a close eye on their fate.

The treaties that marked the end of the first world war destabilised Europe by doing away with multinational Austria-Hungary. This greatly increased the number of small states with artificial frontiers and also created new multinational states with no historical justification, since the "right of peoples" was applied for the benefit of the victors'. The main victims of the drawing of new boundaries in Central and Eastern Europe were therefore the Germans (in the ethnic sense of the term) and the Hungarians. In this respect, Hitler may be regarded both as the heir of numerous

imperialist, nationalist, expansionist and anti-semitic tendencies dating back to the Second Reich and as a consequence of the Treaty of Versailles. His prime aim was to establish a block of Germans at the heart of Europe and subordinate the Eastern territories, which were to be exploited from Berlin. His failure, after six years of peace and six years of world war, left Germany in ruins and under occupation.

The basis of the present situation

- German territory from 1945 to 1949: it was divided into 12 parts in 1945 and subsequently grouped into wider areas; at the end of the process, the partition of Germany led to the establishment of the FRG and the GDR in 1949.

As regards the Eastern territories, which had been subjected to de facto annexation by Poland and the USSR, the GDR recognised the Oder-Neisse line as the border between Germany and Poland in 1950, but it was not until the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe - after an initial thaw in the FRG in 1970 - that the reunification of Germany led to an effective peace settlement which was valid in international law and definitively established the frontiers of Germany arising from the second world war.

- Population movements from 1945 to 1990: attention should first and foremost be drawn to the scale of these movements, which was without precedent in the history of humankind. They took three forms:

  . deportation of 16 million East Germans between 1945 and 1950 (with the disappearance of 2 million people during the transfer operations). This emptied the Eastern territories and Czechoslovakia of their native German population;

  . flight of Germans from the GDR to the FRG: 2.7 million from 1949 to the building of the Berlin Wall and 210,000 thereafter;

  . legalised exodus of Germans from the GDR and other states for the purpose of settling in the FRG. This affected about a million people.

It is easy to understand, on adding up these figures, why the FRG has been described as the "state of refugees par excellence".

The concept of nation in the two German states from 1949 to 1989

- **The concept of nation in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG)**

The concept re-emerged only with the Ostpolitik initiated by Willy Brandt, who asserted in 1969 that there was a single German nation whose existence was based on historical reality, a common language and culture, family ties and the feeling shared by the people of both states that they formed a whole. This definition incorporates both the idea of nation in the cultural sense and that of nation by intent. In addition, the emphasis was laid on the importance of exchanges, which could bring nationals of the two states into contact and thus prevent the German nation from disintegrating. This conception was close to that of the sociologist Isaac Deutsch, who defined the nation as a "historico-political and socio-economic unit designed as a particularly close-knit structure for communication and activity, in which people are brought into contact with one another".

This same conception, which made the FRG both the determined opponent and the benefactor of the GDR, guided the various chancellors down to Helmut Kohl.

The concept of nation in the German Democratic Republic (GDR)

From 1945 to 1949 the political organisations set up in the Soviet-occupied zone unceasingly stressed their attachment to the cause of German unity and, from 1949 to 1955, the Soviets and East Germans voiced their concern to achieve the reunification of Germany as a militarily neutral country, but the FRG's entry into NATO caused a complete break. As from 1970, in fact, the GDR rejected the concept of nation developed in the West and the 1974 Constitution even avoided using the terms Germany and Germans. This was, of course, designed to counter the FRG's Ostpolitik, which was highly embarrassing to the authorities in East Berlin.

The case of Austria

While national feeling was entirely lacking just after the Treaty of Saint-Germain, the ordeals of war and of the post-war years up to the State Treaty of 1955 helped to forge an awareness of Austria's existence as an autonomous nation, though numerous cultural links with Germany remained.

To conclude, there can be no doubt that Germany as it now stands, formed by the two states established according to the will of the victors in 1945 and reunified in 1990, constitutes a nation and that virtually no German "national question" remains on the eve of the 21st century. Germany will play a

crucial part in relations with the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe, who have all, at some point in their history, borne the mark of Germanic influence.

3.3 The impact of nationalism on the conduct of the Versailles negotiations, by G GORIELY, Professor, Université Libre de Bruxelles

To return to the two concepts identified earlier, state-nation (Ancien Régime) and nation-state (characteristic of the 19th century), this last conception (according to which the state is legitimate only insofar as it embodies the life of a nation) may be said to have achieved full recognition with the peace treaties. And yet this system, which we consider more legitimate, was a total failure. It provides a terrifying illustration of the tragic impression of the idea of nationality. Each assertion is disputed and the nationality which feels it has deeper historical roots claims to be superior to the new one now asserting itself.

To understand the decisions taken at and around Versailles, it must be borne in mind that the direct cause of the conflict, much more than the imperialism condemned by Lenin, was nationalism. An effort was therefore made to build peace on the idea of nation, but according to two conflicting principles:

- on the one hand, the peace was intended to be fair and definitive, with borders based on natural affinities;

- on the other, the intention was to punish the "baddies", like Germany, or those who, like Hungary, had been on the wrong side.

The new division did not help matters in Central Europe, where national homogeneity was entirely lacking and towns were often inhabited by different ethnic groups from those living in the countryside. As a result, many regarded the peace as fraught with injustice and many protests were heard in many parts of Central Europe.

Paradoxically, the country where protests were loudest was Germany. Not so much over the loss of the colonies, much more over the principle and amount of the reparations, and still more over the obligation to assume full responsibility for the conflict and also over the loss of the Eastern territories. It should be noted, however, that all this, which caused uproar at the time, adds up to very little by comparison with what Germany suffered to in aftermath of the second world war.

Discussion of the papers concerning the disappearance of the Empires

- What are the reasons for the official myth of Austria as "Hitler's first victim"? It is clearly a consequence of sympathy for Austria in America, as well as a reaction against the rise of the Slav movements.

- Assuming that the principle of nationalities was applied at Versailles and considering that the outcome was a further war, was it possible to avoid this by establishing states based purely on nationality?

  Was it not possible at Versailles to establish states based on a factor other than nationality, precisely when the new states were compelled to accept a treaty of minorities? No; not a single state was spared minority problems because there were no homogeneous entities. The problem was that these issues arose in more acute form in the new states, which were of moderate size and wielded little power.

- Does the issue of nationalism lend itself to case-by-case analysis? In any event, the German example shows that the concept of nation cannot be discussed without reference to a nation's ties with other nations. It would be fatal not to see this, just as it is essential to realise the relativity of concepts such as Central Europe and Western Europe, Eastern Europe. Can they be described as objective concepts?

4. TWO VICTIMS OF CONTEMPORARY HISTORY: ALBANIA AND LITHUANIA

4.1 Tensions in Albania, by J M DEWAELE, Assistant Lecturer, Université libre de Bruxelles

It took Albania a long time to secure recognition of its identity, because it is a Muslim country and as such regarded by many in the region as Turkish. This is a mistake insofar as the Albanians themselves consider that they are authentic Europeans (Illyrians).

They have been independent only since 1912 and were the victims of conflict during both world wars, since heavy fighting took place on their territory. The periods of peace did not necessarily afford them more satisfaction: clan rivalries and regionalism often compounded an already difficult economic situation - with the North held by the conservative landowners and the South by a more open-minded entrepreneurial bourgeoisie. Real power in Albania belonged then to those possessing the guns. As from December 1922, this meant Ahmed Zogu, a great feudal landowner, a "client" of Yugoslavia, then of Italy and ... king as from 1928. The

country then became ... invasion of April 1939. Resistance, first against Italy, then, after 1943, against Germany, was embodied in the Albanian Communist Party set up in 1941, which freed the country from German occupation in November 1944.

The country was then in a poor state: just before the war life expectancy was no more than 38 years, there were no railways, but there was malaria and 85% of the population were illiterate.

Communist Albania developed a Stalinist regime, personified by Enver Hodja, and stubbornly abided by it. It accordingly quarrelled with Kruschev's USSR and turned towards China. But a further break took place in 1975, this time with post-Maoist China.

In its first years the regime was able to boast of obvious economic advances, which in particular won it the faithful support of the peasants. But from 1980 onwards the country was hard hit by the recession that followed the end of Chinese aid. Corrective measures of the standard Marxist type in fact did nothing to improve matters and economic disaster is now latent: national income dropped by 13% from 1989 to 1990.

A comprehensive diagnosis must also take account of the psychological trauma caused by absolute, destabilising cultural confinement. A spectacular consequence of this would seem to be the complete confusion between rumours and reliable information.

Lastly, the problem of Albania today cannot be dissociated from the situation of Kosovo, a Yugoslav territory with a chiefly Albanian population. It is smaller than Albania, but has a much higher standard of living. Plainly, therefore, there is not the slightest chance that the inhabitants of Kosovo will want to become part of Albania, which is sunk in the depths of poverty.

An analysis of Albanian society reveals - and this is not the least of its problems - a series of deep splits: an increasingly marked generation gap, political differences which do not simply reflect the split between town and countryside, regionalist attitudes which still weigh very heavily, the problem of national minorities (Greek and Macedonian) and the inevitable heightening of social inequalities which will stem from privatisation, not to mention the political tensions now leading the country to the brink of explosion.

Does Albanian nationalism exist? It does, in any event, in the minds of this small, lost people resolved to defend its identity and language, so that it finds expression chiefly against Albania's "wicked" Serbian neighbours. Beyond that

there is a dream element which is essential in the present disastrous state of affair - the dream that Albania will one day join Europe.

In practice, however, it is difficult to be nationalist when one realises that one is 40 years behind everyone else and one is also undergoing a very serious crisis of identity.

4.2 Lithuania: history and problems, by G SMOLSKY, Honourary Professor, Ecoles Européennes de Bruxelles

Of the three peoples forming the Baltic branch of the Indo-Europeans exposed from the 13th century onwards to the attacks of the Teutonic Knights, only the Lithuanians succeeded in establishing a fully-fledged state, which reached its peak at the beginning of the 15th century, when it extended as far as the Black Sea and, together with the Poles, victoriously withstood those same Teutonic Knights. During the upheavals of the Reformation, Lithuania remained under Polish and Catholic influence ... and shared the Poles' fate, falling into the Russian sphere of influence with the territorial carve-up at the end of the 18th century.

In broad terms, what are the distinctive features of the Lithuanian nation through the centuries?

- It is a nation of peasants, who formed the vast majority of the population from the feudal period through the abolition of serfdom (1861) to 1945.

- Their language is one of the most archaic of the Indo-European group. It has been preserved by the peasantry despite attempts at polonisation and russianisation.

- The Catholic faith, entrenched since 1386 (the last evangelisation movement in Europe), was viewed in the 19th and 20th centuries as the chief of the few bulwarks against attempts at russianisation. The Vatican still regards this region as the spearhead of Catholicism in Northern Europe.

- A further feature is the Lithuanians' deep-seated attachment to their native land and ancestral culture. For a long time this was confined to the peasants; at the end of the 19th century it spread to the first generation of intellectuals, who were of rural origin themselves.

- The entire history of Lithuania is based on co-existence with ethnic (and therefore linguistic) minorities: Belorussians, Jews, Poles and Russians.

- Its history is also - and above all - that of a small nation prey to powerful neighbours who were dreaded by the peasantry.

Several revolts against Russia during the 19th century ended in failure. Lithuania's independence was secured only through the defeat of Germany and the sidelining of Russia. It was enshrined in the Treaty of Versailles with the acquisition of Memel and the departure of the German troops. Like the other newly-independent Baltic states, Lithuania was then recognised by Russia under Lenin, whereas the West regarded it as part of the barrier or cordon sanitaire erected against Bolshevism.

The brief period of independence may be broadly divided into two phases:

1920-26: democratic and parliamentary phase with a multi-party system (except the Communist Party);

1926-40: authoritarian phase under the leadership of Voldemaras, head of the para-fascist organisation "Iron Wolf". Lithuanian nationalism as it developed between 1920 and 1940 was anti-socialist from the outset, but also anti-Polish and strongly influenced by the conservative leanings of the peasantry.

Annexation by the USSR was the outcome of the mounting dangers in Eastern Europe in the late 1930s. Under the secret protocols of the Germano-Soviet pact, Lithuania was incorporated into the Soviet sphere of influence and as early as October 1939 a treaty of mutual assistance led to the establishment of Soviet bases and garrisons. Annexation was then carried out by degrees, from June to August 1940, with an election open only to the pro-communist party, which won 99% of the votes. This "first Soviet regime" was interrupted by the German occupation, which started on 22 June 1941 and lasted until 1944. The "second Soviet regime" ensued and maintained its iron grip on Lithuania until the system was challenged on Gorbachev's initiative in 1985.

In Lithuania, perestroika resulted in an independent stance by the local Communist Party (90% of which was against remaining within the USSR) and in the growing success of the staunchly pro-independence and anti-communist Sajudis party led by V Landsbergis. Brought to power by the elections held in February 1990, this party set in motion the actual process leading to independence, followed by the two other Baltic Republics. It also sparked off forceful military reactions by the Soviet army, whether acting on or without the instructions of the state authorities.

Gorbachev's official position was not to refuse independence in principle, but, by making use of the statutory time limits, to make the process both very lengthy and highly complex. Faced with this state of affairs, Western Europe in fact adopted an ultra-cautious, not to say timorous attitude, fearing that the independence of the Baltic countries would lead to that of other republics in the Soviet Union and further jeopardise Gorbachev's chances of staying in power.

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If independence is established, Lithuanian nationalism will have to be wary of the evils that have always haunted it - anti-semitism, religious intolerance and a tendency to authoritarianism - all faults against which the democratic bodies of Western Europe can provide an effective reference framework.

DISCUSSION OF THE PAPERS ON ALBANIA AND LITHUANIA

- Does not the charismatic role of Lithuania's President Landsbergis conceal a long-term danger for the country's future? All forms of nationalism have their charismatic leaders. So far Landsbergis has respected parliament's powers, but the temptation to drift into authoritarianism or into the saviour role in the event of a serious crisis should never be discounted.

- How is Albania's dispute with Greece developing? For the time being it is in abeyance. At the moment the Albanians are prepared to make any concessions in order to secure economic aid - notably from Greece, a member of the European Community - which they desperately need.

- What was the psychological impact of the Albanians' decades of confinement? Firstly, there is the refusal to take any notice of information, which is replaced by the wildest rumours spreading on a very large scale. There is also the practice of doublespeak: what people say at the factory is not the same as what they say at home. Lastly, there is an extreme simplification of the issues: it is black or white, it cannot be grey ...

5. NATIONALISM IN THE VARIOUS COMPONENTS OF BELGIUM

5.1. From returning brothers to German-speaking Belgians - a minority and its evolution by A MINKE, State Archivist, Eupen

The effects of the Treaty of Versailles (1920-40)

For the Belgian delegation to the Treaty of Versailles, the annexation of Eupen and Malmedy, two small territories to the east of the kingdom, was a minimal demand by comparison with the dreams of a greater Belgium extending to the Rhine as fuelled by extreme right-wing circles. However, on 11 November 1918 when the fighting ended, the inhabitants of the area in question, who were German subjects, had no idea that defeat would entail a change of nationality for them.

Article 34 of the Treaty of Versailles, which allocated Eupen and Malmedy to Belgium, provided for a popular vote; this was indeed carried out, but under circumstances which

made it unreliable[2]. The - predictable - result showed a very substantial majority for the pro-Belgian vote, which was then ratified by the League of Nations.

The first years of Belgian administration were reminiscent of a proconsulate Lieutenant-General Baltia exercised virtually unlimited powers in the region and was answerable only to the Prime Minister. In 1925 this transitional regime ended with the area being purely and simply incorporated into the district of Verviers. However, it seems that official circles in Belgium were not yet fully resolved to keep the territories; secret negotiations were undertaken with a view to exchanging them with Germany against financial compensation. France torpedoed the scheme.

Hitler's assumption of power altered the terms of the problem and marked the beginning of Germany's drive to erase the "depredations" of Versailles. A pro-nazi party, the Front de Fidélité à la Patrie, in fact financed by Hitler, accordingly appeared in the region. Its success steadily increased until it won an absolute majority in the elections. By the eve of the second world war the gap between pro-Belgians and pro-Germans was unbridgeable.

On 10 May 1940 the Germans entered without encountering opposition and, very soon, on 18 May, while Belgium was still at war, Hitler decreed that the territories he had recovered were part of Germany. (The government protested against their annexation in ... July 1943.) The local population therefore considered itself irrevocably annexed.

Annexation (1940-44)

Annexation was greeted with joy by a substantial section of the population, but soon made its adverse effects felt, especially with the forced enlistment of young men. Once it was realised that they were often assigned to particularly dangerous posts, public opinion increasingly turned against Germany.

In the last months of the war, the Ardennes offensive of December 1944 brought the fighting to the heart of this area and wiped out the town of Saint-Vith.

The Eastern cantons (1945-63)

The end of the war, unleashed a wave of denunciations. War tribunals sat at Eupen and Malmedy from February 1946 to June 1947. Of the 15,000 investigations opened, affecting 25% of the population (the national average being 4.15%), the number of those leading to convictions proved lower than the national average.

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[2] A public register in which the opponents of annexation were required to write their names.

While a deputy district commissioner was appointed for the Eastern cantons in January 1945, respect for the German language in the administration and the education system left much to be desired. Politically speaking, the supremacy of the Catholic element remained unchallenged until 1960.

Self-government (since 1963)

In 1963 the "Eastern cantons" were abolished and replaced by the German-speaking region. The latter initially had no real powers, but increasingly demanded cultural self-government, which was in fact the chief demand of the new party now competing with the Christian-Social Party, the PDB. The establishment of a Community Council empowered to issue decrees and a Community Executive was included in the Constitution in 1980 and took effect on 30 January 1984.

The German-speaking Belgians feel at ease with the self-government they have acquired and the efficient machinery for protecting their minority, but the process has not yet ended: the idea of a fourth region or a tenth province is being mooted.

5.2. The Flemish movement after 1918, by J CRAEYBECKX, Professor, Vrije Universiteit Brussel

The first world war and its immediate aftermath indisputably acted as a catalyst for the Flemish movement - witness the reception given to the Franco-Belgian military agreement and the occupation of the Ruhr. These two events prompted the slogan: "Los van Frankrijk" and it was also at this time that the symbolic tower of the Yser was built.

However, to understand this change in attitude, it is necessary to take a brief look at the situation prevailing before 1914, and remember that in their initial demands the Flemish nationalists did not recognise a Belgian people but a Belgian nation; their position became more radical only around 1860, when it was clearly arousing little sympathy on the Walloon side. The Walloons believed that Belgium should be entirely French-speaking. After 1880 a deeper awareness of the existence of two nations emerged in Flanders, but the idea of administrative separation did not begin to grow until about 1900.

Immediately before the war all parties joined forces - albeit with some difficulty - in the struggle for a Flemish university at Ghent, while the Walloon Assembly in turn broached the idea of administrative separation.

During the war Flemish nationalism split into two trends: the frontists, who demanded self-management as well as Flemish regiments, and the activists, who called for a self-governing

Flemish state. The victory in 1918 sparked off a witch hunt against activists and at the same time caused a de facto stalemate in the issue of Ghent University. Two trends then emerged:

- the minimalists, who believed that the laws could be changed by "Flemish biological force" and the creation of a "Vlaamse Gentleman",

- the maximalists, who originated among the frontists and activists and who advocated Belgian (or Thiois) federalism.

This time the involvement of students, many more of whom were now of lower middle-class origin, led in some instances to conflict with the bishops themselves, since the Church continued to side with Cardinal Van Roey, as it had with Cardinal Mercier.

1928 marked a turning-point with the election of the "collaborator" Borms in Antwerp. This frightened the establishment and, in the medium term, gave rise to the language laws of 1932, which meant the end of Wallonia's support for the French-speaking inhabitants of Flanders.

In the 1930s the extreme right-wing ideology ruling Italy, then Germany, exerted considerable influence, and corporatist and anti-parliamentarian views mushroomed. Rex in Wallonia was matched by the VNV in Flanders. In 1940 both movements opted for active collaboration with the Nazis - which is what blocked the establishment of a federal government in Belgium after 1950.

Altogether, the Flemish nationalist movements twice illustrated the dangers inherent in the deviation of a democratic movement.

To conclude, an attempt to define the specific features of the Flemish movement might include the following remarks: it cannot be regarded as the voice of a people subjected to foreign rule or as a powerful social movement, since its aims assumed practical form with the emergence of a new Flemish bourgeoisie well into the 20th century. Equally, it would be wrong to underestimate the part played by the irrational in the movement.

5.3 Does Walloon nationalism exist by P DESTATTE, Director, Institut Jules Destrée, Charleroi

The question is well worth asking, but it is not a straightforward one. It was not straightforward even in 1906, when Jules Destrée considered it. Right up to the end of his life he repeatedly voiced his concern that Belgium should remain in existence despite its homogeneity. However, he

strongly criticised the concept of national soul, or Belgian soul, as hollow words which provided a "convenient excuse for justifying the constant injustices perpetrated by our Flemish masters against Wallonia".

Charles Plisnier, the novelist from Hainault, gave much thought to the combination of "people-nation-state". In his view, while there was indeed a Walloon people, there was no Walloon nation. It should be noted that his thinking was influenced by his time - 1941.

A different analysis of Walloon "nationalism" is given in the works of Fernand Dehousse, a Liège politician, who pointed out in a text dated 1937[3] that, unlike the other nationalist movements of the time, the Walloon movement did not set out to oppress or exclude anyone. Wallonia favoured an open-door policy and self-government did not mean cutting off relations with Flanders.

A further question would be the extent to which Walloon nationalist feeling exists in people's minds. According to André Renard[4], class consciousness developed in Wallonia before Walloon nationalist feeling, while the opposite occurred in Flanders.

In the 1980s, intellectuals (Manifeste pour une culture wallonne, 1983) and lawyers (François Perin) took a closer look at the issue. What is the position at present? The pre-existence of Wallonia is a very broad issue, but as Fernand Braudel suggests, a nation taking shape is no simple matter. A nation can exist only if it is continually in search of its own identity.

Discussion of the papers on Belgium

- Were there identifiable changes in Jules Destrée's thinking? The thinking of the "founding father" of Walloon identity varied according to his own circumstances and also to the historical situation. After 1914-18, for example, he paid much more attention to the implications of social and economic commitment than in his first works.

- Has the concept of opposition to Flanders always carried the same weight in Walloon circles? On the contrary, it seems to be fading and giving way to an assertion of Walloon identity in relation to the building of Europe.

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[3] F DEHOUSSE, Propos de doctrine. Y a-t-il un "nationalisme" wallon? in l'Action wallonne, 15 October 1937, p 3.

[4] A trade union activist and convinced federalist in Liège in the 1950s.

- What part did the Catholic Church play in Eupen and Malmedy when they were annexed by Belgium? It reacted very fast to the new circumstances, since a bishopric operated in Malmedy from 1921 to 1924. This haste was due to the pressure exerted on the Vatican by Cardinal Mercier, a Belgian nationalist who embodied the struggle against Germany between 1914 and 1918.

- Is the German-speaking region gradually developing its own culture? A regional literature has developed since 1970, but the main factor is the attraction of the nearby German cities of Aachen and Cologne, where many students from the area attend university. This is a real danger for the future of the region because it results in a minor brain drain and causes many university graduates to settle in Germany.

6. THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND NATIONAL MINORITIES

The Council of Europe and the awakening of nationalities by A PEROTTI, Director of the Centre d'information et d'études sur les migrations internationales, Paris.

The Council of Europe has not yet adopted a position arising from an in-depth discussion of the awakening of nationalities witnessed since 1989. The subject can therefore be addressed only in outline, but the work of various Council of Europe bodies[5] already suggests several points which could form the basis of consistent European thinking as a prelude to political action in the matter of nationalities.

This issue is fully in line with the concerns of the first organisation to be set up after the tragedy of the second world war, with the task of safeguarding democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms in Europe. To date, the Council of Europe is known to be the broadest permanent forum on our continent, second only to the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). It currently has 25 members and has been joined in the past few months by several countries of the former Eastern Europe. This has lent weight to the debates and external relations of the great Strasbourg assembly.

Broadly speaking, several significant stages can be identified in the Council of Europe's consideration of the nationalities issue:

- the texts deriving from the European Convention on Human Rights and, in particular, in the early 1960s, Recommendation 285 (1961) of the Parliamentary Assembly

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[5] Parliamentary Assembly, Steering Committee for Human Rights, Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities, Council for Cultural Co-operation, European Committee on Migration.

on "the rights of national minorities", which are described as "non-dominant groups aware of belonging to a national minority". A text protecting them was subsequently prepared, providing that persons belonging to a national minority could not be deprived of the right, shared by the other members of their group and subject to the requirements of public order, to lead their own cultural life, use their own language, open their own schools, receive education in the language of their choice and profess and practise their own religion. This text was not included in any protocol because it came up against a fundamental problem: the convention covers individual rights, whereas this is obviously a matter of collective rights.

- From the mid-1970s to the beginning of 1981, several Council of Europe bodies looked into the matter of modern languages in Europe, which is one of the most sensitive issues addressed by minority demands. This paved the way for the concept of the rights of linguistic minorities, which, according to Recommendation 814 (1977) of the Parliamentary Assembly on "modern languages in Europe", should be safeguarded because cultural diversity is an irreplaceable asset. Much remains to be done in this area: The European Charter for Regional Minority Languages has not yet passed the stage of discussion by government experts.

- In the 1970s and up to the mid-1980s, the questions of regionalisation and transfrontier co-operation shed new and highly significant light on the issue, enabling the awakening of nationalities to be discussed in a rational, objective framework in terms of geographical, economic and social factors. Thus the concept of region was very precisely defined as a historical, cultural, geographical or economic unit and community. Likewise, the principles of transfrontier co-operation were defined with a very clear statement of the underlying purpose, namely to reduce the divisive effects of the national borders that criss-cross the face of Europe. The same intention is expressed in the final declarations of two European symposia on frontier regions, which state that borders used to be the scars of history, but must now become the points where nations meet. This assertion is followed by a whole list of principles and concepts to be introduced into primary and secondary education, especially in history, geography and ecology lessons.

- The development of human rights education and intercultural education and the growth of European co-operation in this area, especially in secondary education.

- Lastly, the recent emergence of the idea of a multicultural European society, which should result in a Council of Europe charter.

In addition, outside the Council of Europe, the Helsinki CSCE (1973) drew attention, in its third basket, to the potential contribution of national, cultural and regional minorities.

It is becoming increasingly clear that, in the years to come the Council of Europe can, because of its structure, aims and present and future membership, play a major part in carrying the debate further and improving co-operation in Europe in this area.

7. CONCLUSIONS

All the participants were of the opinion that this symposium, although too brief, had provided much food for thought.

Some welcomed the fact that current affairs were now enlisting the aid of history: to understand the present map of Europe it was necessary to go back at least as far as 1919 (and beyond - in many respects what was needed was an insight into 19th century Europe). A pupil and teacher in 1900 would certainly have been more adept than us at dealing with the concepts of nationality which have been perplexing us so often over the past two years.

A historical perspective on these issues is in fact all too often lacking from daily coverage by the media, and explains the caricatural or quite simply misleading accounts we often find so disturbing.

In addition, the disappearance of the Iron Curtain has highlighted the fact that the map of 20th-century Europe was drawn up and dismantled twice as a result of world wars fuelled by nationalism. What was challenged in 1989 was the artificial division of Europe into two blocs in the wake of the nazi defeat of 1945. The more or less perceptible outbreaks of nationalist fervour in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989 are the direct outcome of the choice of frontiers made by the victors in 1918.

However, it would be naive to compare 1918 and 1991. While ethnic conflicts have continued, albeit temporarily muffled by Marxist-Leninist window-dressing, the world has changed and this change - this complete upheaval, one might say - has assumed such proportions that it would be more irrelevant than ever to brandish the "lessons of history". In any event, no one can boast of knowing the miracle that will settle the fate of nations in 1991; nor is anyone capable of saying honestly what "should have been done" in 1919. The facts are stubborn and invariably confine politics to the art of doing only what is possible.

The upshot of the papers and discussions heard at Esneux cannot, therefore, be a list of certainties, but on the contrary, a series of questions concerning:

- the peoples who are discontented with the fate decreed for them by the hazards of history in the 20th century;

- the countries faced with nationalist demands, whether expressed peacefully or by violence;

- the Europe of the 12, designed and built on the assumption that the continent is split in two, and now offering Eastern Europe a model and reference point which exert an irresistible attraction and fascination;

- the general configuration of the continent, now on the way to "reunification" but deprived of the "reassurance" of the forced stability imposed in 1945. Will the 21st century witness the beginnings of a broad confederation extending from the Atlantic to the Urals (or beyond)?

- ways and means of ensuring that different nationalities co-exist peacefully within a single entity. In this respect the Belgian experiment, so often ridiculed on account of the complexity of the new institutions, illustrates a type of solution that strikes a balance between rights attached to place of birth and rights of the individual.

So, while we have recently been witnessing "the nations hour of glory" or "the nations' revenge", pessimism is not the only option. Satisfactory answers may be found by dint of goodwill and intelligence, provided that they are combined with a sound knowledge of the historical dimension of the issues.

This means that Europe's history teachers will have a crucial part to play in the eventful years that lie ahead.

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